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US Secretary of State Marco Rubio (left) and Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov (right) at the meeting in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia Tuesday | AFP

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RUSSIA, U.S. TO NAME NEGOTIATORS TO END UKRAINE WAR, SANS KYIV

Russia and the United States will name teams to negotiate a path to ending the war in Ukraine, leaders of both nations said on Tuesday in Riyadh

WON'T ACCEPT OUTCOME OF TALKS: ZELENSKYY

No Ukrainian officials were present at the meeting. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy slammed his nation's exclusion from the Riyadh gathering, which lasted more than four hours. He said that any talks aimed at ending the Ukraine war should be "fair" and involve European countries, including Turkey — which had offered to host negotiations

NEED CONCESSIONS FROM ALL SIDES, SAYS U.S.

- Beyond Ukraine, the meeting attended by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov focussed on improving relations between the two superpowers | P14
- Rubio said ending Russia's war in Ukraine would need concessions from all sides and that Europe would be a part of the talks

$52 bn

THE SIZE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION'S MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR UKRAINE

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

After Modi, Amir talks, Qatar ties in strategic zone

Aim to double bilateral trade from $14 bn in five years, enhance energy, trade partnership

ON A WING AND A PRAYER AS DELTA FLIPS

Videograb of a Delta Air Lines plane upside down at Toronto Pearson Int'l Airport on Tuesday. The jet landed amid strong winds and snow, leading to it crashing and flipping over. Its right wing was missing. All 80 on board survived

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

INDIA and Qatar elevated their relationship to a strategic partnership on Tuesday, agreeing to double their annual trade from $14 billion in five years and focusing on enhancing cooperation in energy, investments and the technology sector following talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani.

Both sides signed agreements and five memorandums of understanding (MOUs), including a revised double taxation avoidance pact. India already has strategic ties with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Kuwait within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

"Had a very productive meeting with my brother, Amir of Qatar H.H. Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, earlier today. Under his leadership, Qatar has scaled new heights of progress. He is also committed to a strong India-Qatar friendship. This visit is even more special because we have elevated our ties to a Strategic Partnership," Modi said on X.

"Trade, investment and energy were among the major topics of discussion between the two leaders today," said Arun Chatterjee, Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs.

PIC: SHEKHAR YADAV

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hugs Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Tuesday

Qatar is also a major investor in India, with the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) holding around $1.5 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) across sectors like retail, power, IT, education, healthcare and affordable housing.

Both leaders identified a number of areas in which the QIA can increase investments.

This is the Amir's second visit to India after Modi came to power.

Regarding a Navy official who is still in Qatari jail Chatterjee said: "I would like to just mention that his matter still remains sub judice in the local courts in Qatar. And as I mentioned, the prime minister appreciated the work that Amir and his government is doing in the protection and the welfare of our Indian citizens."

EXPRESS READ

SC gives relief to Allahbadia, raps him for 'vulgarity'

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday granted interim protection from arrest to podcaster Ranveer Allahbadia over his comments on a YouTube show, while saying he had a "dirty mind". "Where is the question of an individual's morality? You tell us, if there is anyone on earth who would like these kinds of words," said Justice Surya Kant.

Rahul, Tharoor thaw on *TNIE* col

PREETHA NAIR & K S SREEJITH @ New Delhi / T'Puram

Rahul Gandhi

Shashi Tharoor

AMID the row over Congress MP Shashi Tharoor's recent column in this newspaper backing the CPM-led Kerala government's development initiatives, senior leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday held a 30-minute one-on-one meeting with the four-time MP from Thiruvananthapuram, who has come under fire from the party's state unit.

Sources said the Congress' top leadership has decided to stand with Tharoor, who managed to convince Rahul about the facts in his column. Both leaders also agreed to meet more frequently.

This is the first such meeting between Rahul and Tharoor in about three years and is seen as a reconciliatory effort on the part of the central leadership.

"Tharoor has been trying for an appointment with Rahul ever since the latter contested for Congress president in 2022. It required a n article for that to happen," a close confidant of Tharoor said in half jest.

However, the development is seen as a blow to the state leadership. Leader of Opposition V D Satheeshan, his predecessor Ramesh Chennithala, and senior leader K Muralidharan had buried their differences and united to condemn Tharoor.

Sources said Tharoor raised the issues of non-cooperation from the Kerala leadership and lack of inclusiveness in discussions at the national level.

Speaking to reporters later, AICC general secretary (organisation) K C Veugopal said all is well in the party and that Tharoor shares the party's views.

Tharoor declined to comment on his meeting with Rahul Gandhi. "It was a long-pending request I had made for a meeting to discuss various issues. Since it was a meeting where only the two of us were present throughout, it would not be appropriate for me to say anything more," he said.

Extradited middleman in Westland case gets bail

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Tuesday granted bail to alleged middleman Christian Michel James in the ₹3,600-crore AgustaWestland case being probed by the CBI.

A bench of justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta observed James was in custody for the past six years while the investigation in the matter by CBI was still underway.

James, however, cannot walk out of jail as he faces another money laundering case in the Delhi High Court.

"The petitioner was extradited in 2018 and has been in custody for more than 6 years. According to the CBI...the investigation is still on. We are inclined to grant bail," said the bench. It said given the speed, the trial would not conclude in 25 years.

The scam relates to irregularities in purchase of 12 VVIP helicopters from AgustaWestland. James is one among three middlemen in the case. Guido Haschke and Carlo Gerosa are the other two. The CBI chargesheet alleged a loss of ₹2,666 crore to the exchequer due to the deal signed on February 8, 2010.

ESPIONAGE: NIA ARRESTS 2 FROM KARWAR, ANKOLA

SUBHASH CHANDRA NS @ Karwar/Ankola

SLEUTHS of National Investigation Agency (NIA) raided two houses in Karwar and Ankola taluks on Tuesday morning and arrested two persons for espionage and leaking crucial information related to the Kadamba Naval Base to agents from Pakistan.

The accused, identified as Akshay Naik and Vethan Tandel, passed information, including photographs of warships and aircraft carriers, to the agents. They were taken to the NIA headquarters in Hyderabad for further investigation.

NIA sleuths with Akshay Naik and Vethan Tandel in Karwar on Tuesday | EXPRESS

After two years of investigation, the sleuths cracked the espionage case where the duo, who were working on a contract basis at the naval base, were found sending crucial information to their handlers. Naik and Tandel were produced before a court in Karwar for transit warrant before taking them to Hyderabad. Both were taken into custody for interrogation a few months ago by NIA sleuths after a case was registered on June 5, 2023, in Hyderabad.

A few arrests made in Mumbai and other places revealed that some employees of Shivam Marine Corporation and Ultra Marine Corporation, which supply skilled workers to the naval base, were sending information and photographs of the base to the agents of the enemy country. Naik and Tandel used to send pictures and other information to the accused arrested by NIA sleuths.

Six NIA sleuths arrived in Karwar on Monday night. With the help of local police, they raided the houses of Naik and Tandel at Kalmeshwar village in Ankola taluk and Mudgha village near Amdhalli.

CONTINUED ON: P7

CM to officials: Issue B khatas to site owners in illegal layouts

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday directed deputy commissioners, chief executive officers of zilla panchayats and other revenue officials to start issuing B khatas to those who own sites and houses in unauthorised residential layouts. This will be a one-time settlement scheme and the CM directed the officials to launch this campaign immediately. He has set a deadline of three months.

In a video conference with officials, Siddaramaiah said there is a need to put an end to issues faced by owners of sites and houses in unauthorised and revenue layouts in villages, towns and cities.

Ahead of his budget presentation on March 7, the state can expect to generate some revenue by issuing B khatas. The CM said there are unauthorised layouts in cities, towns and villages. The government will not allow such layouts to come up in the state henceforth. "We have passed a law. Officials have to understand this," he added. He said if any unauthorised layout comes up, action will be taken against DCs and town planning officials.

Referring to middlemen and realtors who mislead innocent property buyers, the CM stressed the need to end this menace.

He said the government would not get any revenue from unauthorised layouts. Even the local bodies are not getting any revenue from them. Site and house owners in such layouts do not pay taxes. P4

IPL betting: 3 of family die by suicide in Mysuru

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

THREE members of a family died by suicide at Ramanahalli here on Monday and Tuesday.

One of the family members' involvement in IPL and online betting and borrowing money from lenders led to their suicide, according to sources.

Unable to bear his sister Merishilin's harassment by money lenders, Joshi Antony ended his life near the cemetery at Ramanahalli on Monday.

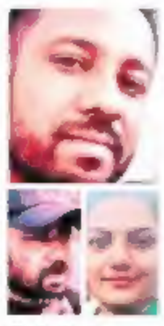
Before ending his life, Joshi Anthony made a video blaming his twin brother Jobi Antony and sister-in-law Sharmila for the harassment faced by Merishilin. He sent the video to his niece before hanging himself at the cemetery, where his parents were buried.

Jobi Antony's involvement in IPL and online betting and gambling made him borrow money from lenders and banks in Merishilin's name.

As he was unable to clear the loans in the name of Merishilin, lenders began harassing her. This led to tension within the family. Frustrated by this, Joshi Antony ended his life.

After Joshi Anthony' suicide, Merishilin filed a complaint against Jobi and Sharmila with Mysuru Rural police. As investigation progressed, Jobi and his wife died by suicide fearing legal consequences on Tuesday morning.

They were found hanging from the staircase railings of a water tank in Vijayanagar. Further investigation is on.



Clockwise from top: Joshi Antony, Sharmila and Jobi

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